

CHAPTER SEVEN

What's In A Name...

"God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform," the poet William Cowper wrote, and how true his statement proved to be in the events that surrounded the establishment of Heber City.

For instance, who would have realized on a summer day in 1837 in Kirtland, Ohio, that within a quarter of a century a rugged blacksmith and potter, Heber C. Kimball, would be remembered in the naming of a community far to the west in the Rocky Mountains.

On that summer Sunday morning in June, 1837, Elder Kimball sat at the side of the Prophet Joseph Smith in a meeting in the Kirtland Temple. Just before the meeting started, the prophet turned and said:

"Brother Heber, the Spirit of the Lord whispers to me, 'Let my servant Heber C. Kimball go to England and open the door of salvation to that nation.'"

The idea staggered Heber. His first thought was leaving his wife and young family in desperate financial circumstances. Also, he felt that his crudeness in speech and manner would be no match for the English people, long noted for their culture, learning and piety. However, he was not one to shirk duty, and something in the manner of the Prophet convinced Heber that the call from Joseph Smith was divinely inspired. He left Kirtland that same month accompanied by Dr. Willard Richards and was eventually joined by Orson Hyde, Joseph Fielding and others.

Elder Kimball was a powerful man, physically, standing a full six feet in height, with a chest that measured the same from back to front as from side to side, and he was just as powerful in his spiritual manner. With the blessings of the Lord he won almost immediate acceptance among the British people.

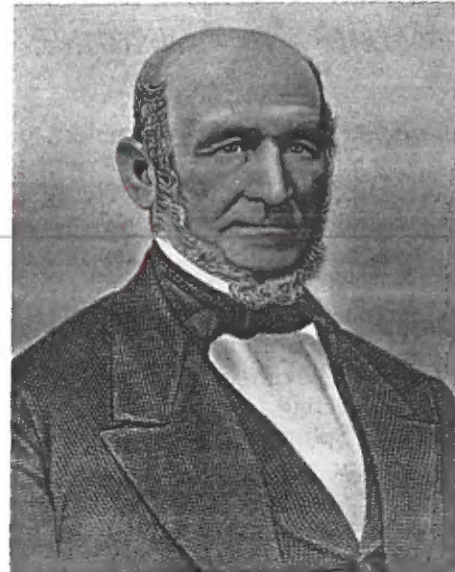
Of Elder Kimball and his work in England, John Henry Evans gives the following description:

"The head of the mission was exceptionally successful. Undoubtedly Joseph Smith had made no mistake in selecting this big-boned man with sloping shoulders, laughing eyes, and a heart full of sympathy to lead the group of elders. Somehow he ingratiated himself with young and old, men, women and little children. When he left, eleven months later, the people he had baptized broke down and cried at the thought of parting.

"For he had made converts by the hundreds. It was a common thing for him to go into the water three and four times a day to perform the rite of baptism to as many as twenty-five at one time. In one place he

In this section the formation of the Militia of the Utah Territorial Militia

converted all the young people in a congregation to whom he preached, and many of the older ones. In eleven months he himself had baptized fifteen hundred."¹



HEBER C. KIMBALL
Heber City was named after him

This love of the British people for their mission leader was not soon forgotten and evidenced itself again and again throughout the Church.

Those who first colonized the new lands of Provo Valley in 1859 and 1860 had come under the influence of Elder Kimball in Great Britain, and when it came time to find a permanent name for their new settlement, the choice was easily made—they would name it for their beloved leader, Brother Heber.

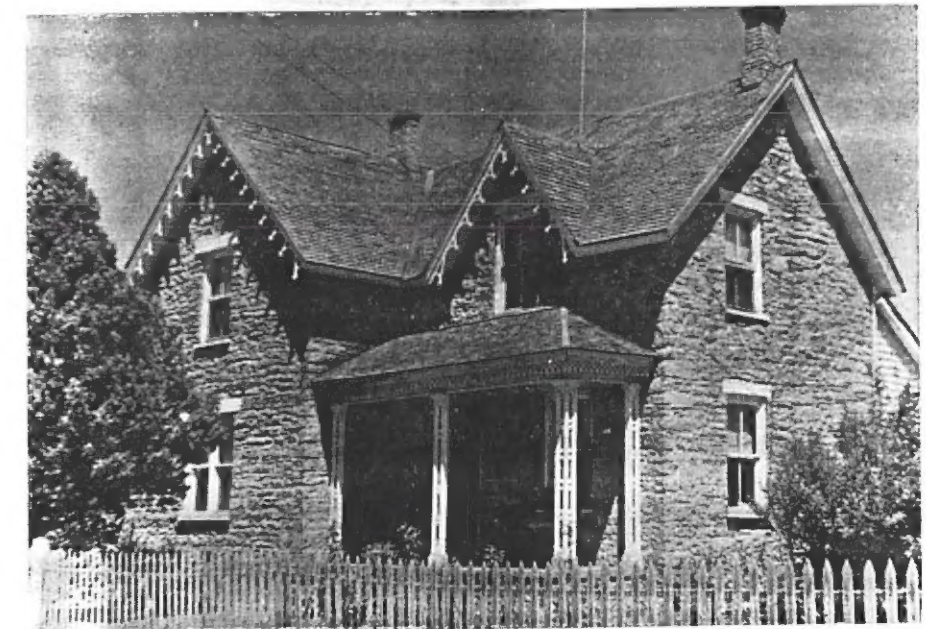
Time has proved that these early colonizers made a wise choice, for Heber C. Kimball became one of the stalwarts in the Church. While many of the early Church leaders in the pre-Utah period had become disappointed and disaffected, Heber C. Kimball never faltered in his defense of the truth. Through persecutions, illness, difficult financial straits and through the good times as well, Elder Kimball continued strong and true to the end. This same spirit of determination and steadfastness has also characterized Heber City, for through bad times as well as good, the community has stood as a bulwark in the valley and as a refuge for those who love the "good life."

The first settlers in the valley, as noted in previous chapters, planted

¹John Henry Evans. *Joseph Smith. An American Prophet* (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1933, pages 99-100.)



The home of Joseph and Jane Sharp Murdock, one of the earlier pioneer homes of Wasatch County. It is still standing and in good condition after 100 years.



The home of Thomas Todd, erected from native red sandstone in 1879. It is still standing.

the seeds of settlement at a spring they called London. The London campsite became the largest settlement and when the area was designated as Wasatch County in 1862 the town became Heber City, the county seat.

The early Heber history is filled with stories of discouragement and struggle as the colonizers attempted to win new homes from rough nature. Yet through all the history is woven a strong thread of faith and determination, the fruits of which are being borne even today in a valley of peace and plenty.

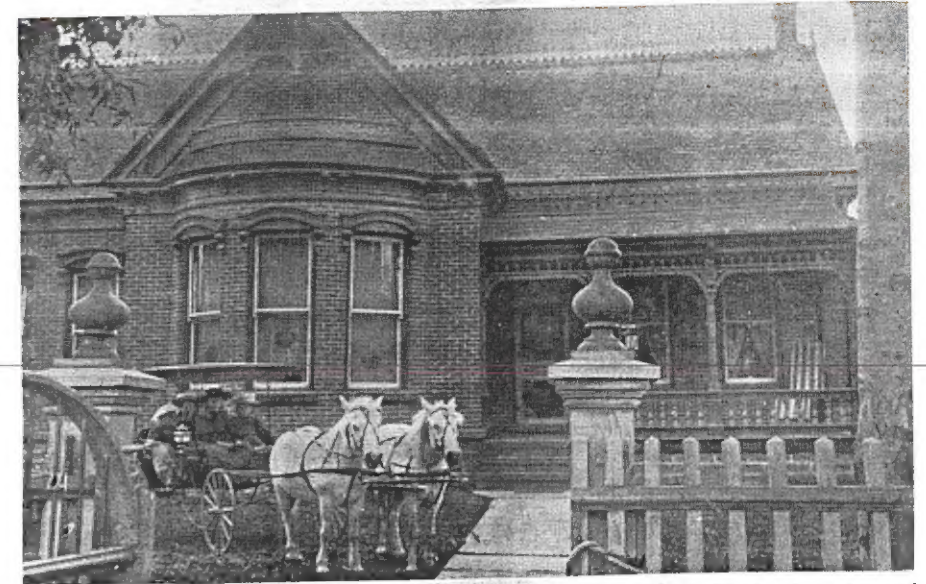
In addition to raising crops and caring for their cattle, the early settlers had to build homes for their families and work on roads, canals, bridges and public buildings. The early log homes had dirt roofs and dirt floors. Home made furniture included stools made from split logs, smoothed with an axe and finished with crude legs. Tables and beds were also made in the same rough way. However, President Brigham Young sent a skilled carpenter, William Bell to the valley and he began to teach the people how to make useful and attractive furniture.

It was 1863 before lumber became available for flooring and before shingles were made to replace the dirt roofs. Dave Stevenson is said to have made the first shingles by hand in the valley.

While settling was still going on, President Young called men on special missions to drive ox teams and wagons across the plains to help bring new settlers to the Rocky Mountain empire. In 1861 three men and teams were the first to be called from Heber City to make the five-



The home of Thomas Rasband, one of the early brick homes. Standing in front of the home are Josephine Booth Rasband, Elizabeth Giles Rasband and Mary Greenwood Giles.



The brick home of James W. Clyde built about 1900. The white Shetland ponies and the two-seated buggy pictured here with the home were leading attractions of all the children in Heber and the surrounding area.

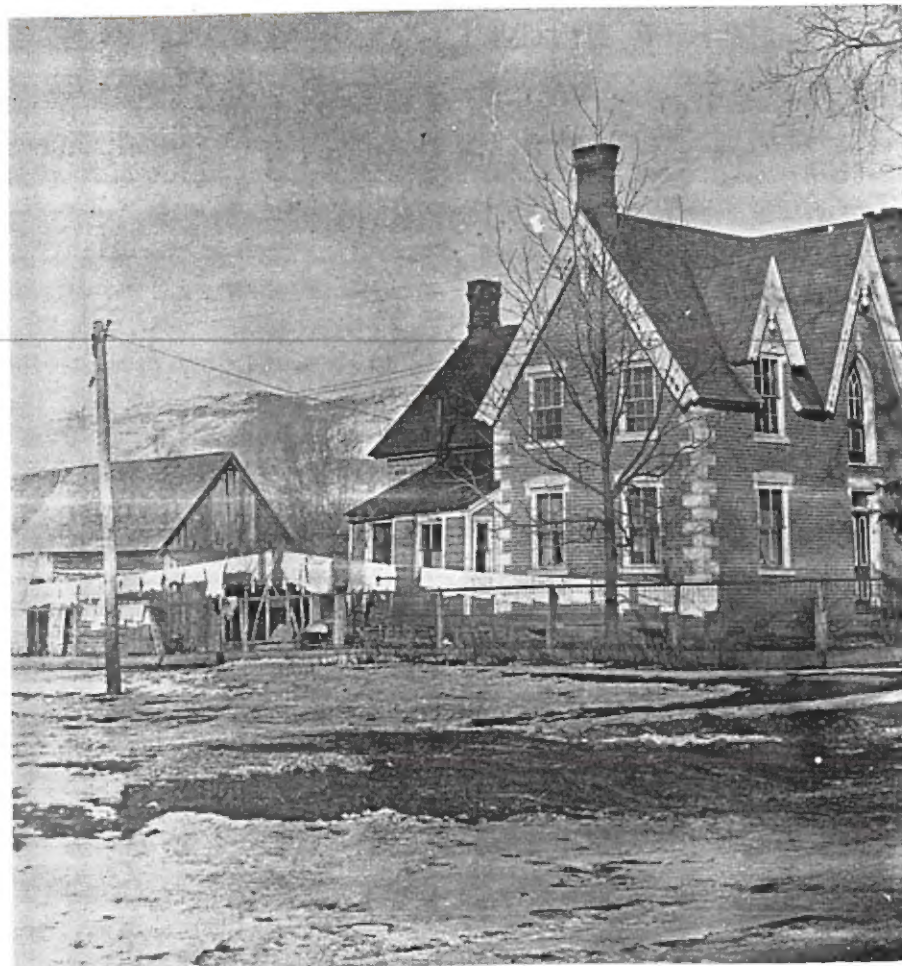
month journey to the end of the railroad lines in the mid-west and back to Zion. From then until 1869 when the railroad came to Utah, many teams and men from Heber City made the trek back and forth.

Because there were no community services available in Heber's early days, people were very self-sufficient. Women made their own soaps for washing and everyone had molds from which candles of mutton tallow were formed. The best lighted homes had a board hanging down from the ceiling with another board attached at right angles to hold from four to six candles.

About 1864 and 1865 a few people began to build homes from the red sandstone so abundant in the area. This excellent building stone eventually found its way into many of the finest buildings in Salt Lake City, Utah County and eastern Utah as well as Wasatch County. Into the Heber homes built of stone went the first metal stoves brought into the area. Coal for the stoves was hauled in from Coalville, a distance of 40 miles. The first stone school and church buildings were erected in the fall of 1864, and were dedicated by President Young. The crowds were reported to be so large that special boweries had to be built to handle the people.

Heber's growing population received an unexpected boost in the Spring of 1866 when nearly all the people from surrounding settlements were forced to move together for protection from the Indians.

A Congressional act of May 5, 1864 had forced the Ute Indians



The old John Crook home constructed from brick manufactured at the Van Wagoner brick yards in Wasatch County.

of Sanpete and Sevier Counties to a reservation in eastern Wasatch County. The Indians, led by Chief Black Hawk were bitter about the move and refused to stay on the reservation land. They roamed over the state and on April 10, 1865 became involved in an incident with white settlers near Manti in Sanpete County. A white person was reported, in a drunken state, to have pulled an Indian off a horse and insulted him. The Indians needed only this slight provocation to go on the warpath.

By the Spring of 1866 the Indians were making general raids, stealing cattle and threatening the lives of the white settlers. Several men were killed in Sanpete and Sevier counties during raids, and because



Residence of Dr. and Mrs. W. R. Wherritt, one of the finest early homes in Heber. Built in the early 1900's by John Austin and purchased by Dr. Wherritt in 1908. It was built before electricity and city water were supplied. Water for the home was hand pumped from a well on the lot to tanks in the top of the home which supplied pressured water. It is still one of the outstanding homes of the city.

of this some white settlers retaliated by killing a few Indians. The war began in earnest then.

Because the Indian reservation was located in Wasatch County the leaders of the territorial militia advised that the people band together to protect themselves. One small settlement was formed at Midway, but most of the valley moved into Heber City.

In the meantime, Colonel Robert T. Burton and David J. Ross came to Heber on May 26, 1866, and enrolled all the available men in the valley into companies to protect the people and their animals. John W. Witt was appointed major of the county militia with Charles Wilcken as adjutant. William M. Wall was appointed Captain of a cavalry company and John Hamilton and Thomas Todd were captains of infantry companies. John Galligher was a captain of a silver grey company. The Midway cavalry company was headed by Sidney Epperson, and Ira Jacob was captain of the Midway infantry. Other officers of the militia were John Crook, David Van Wagoner, Joseph McCarrel and John M. Murdock.

One of the first acts of the Wasatch militia was to make peace. A



Home of David and Mary Ann McDonald Fisher. Erected in 1892, it still stands today as a monument to quality materials and proper workmanship. When built it had a hot air heating system and pressure water system.

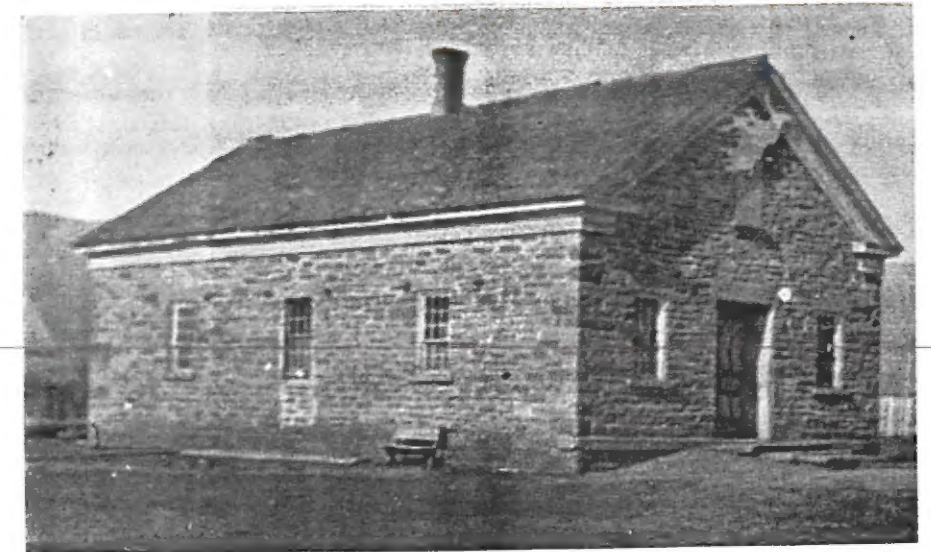
company of 24 men under the direction of Captain Wall took three wagon loads of supplies and started for the Indian reservation. They also took about a hundred head of beef cattle to be given as a peace offering from President Brigham Young. They were instructed to have the Indians accept the cattle as a peace offering and end the war. However, if the Indians did not agree to peace, they were to give them the cattle anyway as indication of the good will of the Mormon people.

Joseph S. McDonald, a member of Captain Wall's party, recounted in later years the group's experiences:

"We arrived at the Indian Agency block houses on the west fork of the Duchesne River all right, and found two or three government men there, but very few Indians, mostly squaws. Black Hawk and his warriors were further south. An Indian runner was sent to tell him that Captain Wall and his men had brought a herd of cattle as a present from President Young with his best wishes, and that he hoped the Indians would accept them and make peace and all be good friends again.

"Chief Tabby, who had always been friendly and peaceable, had been persuaded by the other Indians that they had been greatly wronged and he told Captain Wall when he came into the Agency that he was mad and thought it would be good for blood to run, and that it was going to run when his Indians came in. He warned us to prepare for trouble.

"When Chief Tabby had said this, we went to work to prepare to

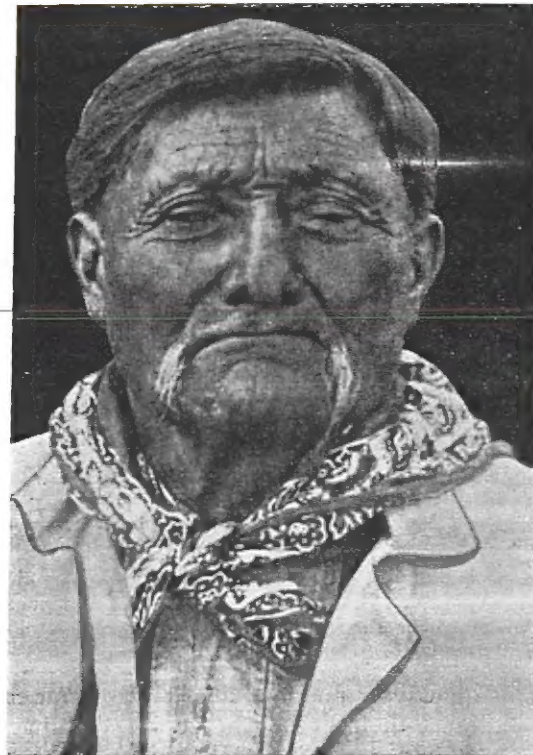


An early red sandstone building in Heber used both for school and Church functions. Located in the north east section of town, it served as the first meeting house of the Heber East Ward, and then the First Ward.

defend ourselves as quickly as possible, and it was wonderful what a few men could do to protect their lives in a very short time. A well was dug close by so we would get water, and with a large auger we bored port holes in one side of the block house so we could shoot if need be to defend ourselves. Then we built a strong corral around the cattle close by so that the Indians could not take them by force. In the meantime, we learned that the Indians had taken all their squaws and papooses back into the hills, out of the way of the expected fighting. This condition lasted some three days.

"Then one morning we saw the Indians moving in among the cedars and finally they came to a stand-still. Chief Tabby sent an Indian to tell us he was coming quickly with ten or twelve Indians. We told him to tell Tabby we were ready and if they came to fight we would shoot them. There were 275 Indians close by and they circled around the agent's cabin a few feet away. Tabby got off his horse and went into the cabin. While he was in there an Indian shouted and all the Indians ran into the cedars.

"Captain Wall then said, 'I'll go to the other cabin and talk to Tabby, and don't any of you go out while I am gone and don't let any Indians in here.' He talked for three hours with Tabby and agreed to meet him again the next morning to decide whether it would be peace or war. Next morning, Tabby brought some Indians with him and Captain Wall talked with him nearly all day. We learned that Tabby would make



CHIEF TABBY

peace if we would kill a man in Sanpete County named Sloan. Of course, we could not agree to this, and after more talk, Tabby agreed to take the cattle and make peace as far as he was concerned.

"That evening it was my turn to stand guard and the Indians began to shout and yell as they stood around their campfire, and they all seemed to be very much excited. I reported to Captain Wall that they surely intended to kill us. When Tabby heard the noise he went to their campfire and said 'What's the matter with you Indians? You know I have made peace with the Mormons. Stop your shouting.'

"Tabby told us in going home to keep right in the wagon road and go as quickly as possible as he was afraid his Indians might shoot us as he could hardly restrain them."

When Captain Wall and his company returned home after 12 days, they found an alarmed and anxious community. Because of the long absence a search party had been organized and was ready to leave. Their anxiety had been heightened when one of the company's horses returned to Heber with a bullet wound, and they supposed that the owner, John Acomb, had either been killed or wounded.

However, the wounded horse was easily explained when Captain Wall reported that on the way to the Indian reservation they had stopped in Strawberry Valley to prepare a meal. They had tied their horses to trees and left the saddles on them, and their guns tied to the saddles. One horse tried to roll over and the gun on its saddle discharged, killing one horse and wounding John Acomb's horse so that it couldn't be used. The wounded horse was turned loose, and in a few days wandered into Heber to cause wonderment and alarm among the people.

Captain Wall's efforts with Chief Tabby appeased the Indians in Provo Valley to a great extent, though some raiding still existed. Men were not allowed to go into the canyons to work without being in a company of at least 10, one of whom was placed on guard. Drums were used to signal.

Bishop Joseph S. Murdock also aided greatly in keeping peace in Wasatch County. He had reared an Indian girl and subsequently married her, and because of this was favorably known among the Indians. He exerted much influence to stop the Indians from stealing and killing.

In 1867 Bishop Murdock invited Chief Tabby and some of the lesser chiefs to Heber, along with their squaws and papooses. An ox was killed and a big feast prepared in a specially built bowery. All the Indians seemed to enjoy the feast and went back to the reservation carrying a part of the beef, along with flour, bacon and other good things. This event is credited with creating much good will, for few raids were made after that in Wasatch County. However, the war continued strong in other parts of the state until 1868 when peace was achieved. At least 70 white persons lost their lives in the fighting, and countless numbers of Indians also died.

With a peace pact agreed upon, some settlers from outlying communities began to return to their former homes. However, many had become established in Heber City and decided to stay on, adding their strength to the county's largest community.

By 1868 the city was well on its way to solidarity. The Church was continuing to give the strength that it had brought to the community since the beginning; business and industry were beginning to flourish; education had been making new strides in the East and West schools, civil government was becoming separated from Church leadership, and cultural events were playing a leading role in the lives of the people.

These significant areas of achievement in Heber City will be traced in the five following chapters.

